



Natural Resources Conservation Service
9173 W. Barnes Dr., Suite C
Boise, ID 83709-1574

**SUBJECT: PDM – Southern Washington County PL-566
Watershed Protection Plan/
Environmental Assessment**

DATE: September 1, 2005

TO: See Attached Distribution List

CODE: 390-11

A draft of the Watershed Protection Plan/Environmental Assessment (Plan/EA) for the Southern Washington County Watershed was recently completed. The Plan/EA is now being distributed to interested and concerned agencies, groups, units of government, organizations and watershed sponsors as part of the public participation/interagency review process.

The Plan/EA was developed to address the problems associated with degradation of ground water quality and surface water quality in the Weiser and Snake Rivers. The Resource Protection Plan alternative will provide resource protection throughout the entire watershed area. Benefits will be realized from reduced groundwater contamination by reducing deep leaching of nutrients and pesticides to the Western Snake River Plain Aquifer (Southern Washington County), protection of long-term soil productivity, reduced irrigation induced erosion and reduced sediment, nutrient, pesticide and pathogen delivery to the Weiser and Snake Rivers and area tributaries.

This area has been designated by the state of Idaho as the first-ranked priority concern for nitrates in ground water since 2001. The Snake and Weiser Rivers and tributary streams in the project area are considered by Idaho to be water quality-limited stream segments. The project area directly impacts the Weiser and lower Snake Rivers and tributaries (four other 303(d) listed stream tributaries). Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) for phosphorus, sediment and coliform-bacteria have been, or are being, developed for these streams/rivers.

This Plan/EA provides for practices that are focused on reducing off-site sediment by 66 percent and associated nutrients to surface waters by 62 percent, improving and/or restoring groundwater quality by reducing leached nitrate nitrogen by 59 percent and reduction of bacteria, pathogens and pesticides delivered to the Weiser and Lower Snake Rivers. The planned water quality practices will have an overall effect of improving or restoring the designated beneficial uses of the surface and ground waters of the Southern Washington County Watershed, and, at the same time, providing the necessary treatment for resolving TMDL mandates.

At this time, the specific practices are known; however, it is not known who will be participating and the exact location of where the practices will be installed. Practices to be installed include those which reduce nitrate leaching to ground water and reduce irrigation induced erosion and

sedimentation such as: irrigation system-gated pipe (with surge), micro (drip) irrigation, tail water recovery systems, sprinkler re-nozzle, sprinkler systems, irrigation water management (moisture sensors and meters) and sediment basins. Management practices include: conservation crop rotation, irrigation water management, nutrient management, use of PAM, pest management, prescribed grazing, residue management (mulch till and seasonal), and straw mulch.

We would appreciate your review and comments concerning this draft Plan/EA. If you have questions, please contact John Kendrick at the NRCS State Office in Boise by phone (378-5729) or e-mail (John.Kendrick@id.usda.gov). Comments should be addressed to Mark Weatherstone, ASTC – Technical Services, 9173 Barnes Dr., Suite C, Boise, Idaho 83709-1574 and postmarked no later than **Saturday October 15, 2005**. If you wish to send your comments by e-mail the address is Mark.Weatherstone@id.usda.gov. An electronic version of the draft plan will be available on the Idaho NRCS Website at <http://www.id.nrcs.usda.gov/> if additional copies are needed.

ADOLFO PEREZ
Acting State Conservationist

Attachments

cc:

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